

Active Cycle of Breathing (ACBT)

Information and advice for patients

Respiratory Physiotherapy

What is Active Cycle of Breathing (ACBT)?

ACBT is a cycle of breathing and clearance techniques aimed to help clear sputum (phlegm) from your chest easier. It aims to loosen and move the sputum up your airways to improve chest clearance.

It's best to complete daily even when you are well and increase frequency if you have a chest infection– but your physiotherapist can talk through a regime to suit you best.

How do I do ACBT?

1. Breathing control

Relax your breathing, aim to breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Try to use your tummy rather than your chest to breathe.

2. Deep Breaths

Take long and slow deep breaths in through your nose. Aim to hold the breath in and breathe out through your mouth.

You repeat steps 1 and 2 before moving on.

3. Huff

Take a deep breath in and huff out (imagine you are trying to steam up a mirror). You can take a longer or a shorter huff out– your physiotherapist will advise you on which is best for you.

4. Cough

After you have mobilized the secretions higher up with the above, have a good strong cough to clear secretions.

ACBT can be performed in sitting, lying or standing– your physiotherapist may advise you of a position.

ACBT Top Tips

- Ensure you are hydrated– this will help to keep your phlegm loose
- Complete ACBT after you have used your nebulisers or taken your carbocisteine (if you are prescribed these)
- You can use this technique with your acapella/aerobika if you physiotherapist has issued you one, replace step 3 with your acapella aerobika.

Your regime:

Your physiotherapist _____

Recommends the following:

1. Breathing control until you feel relaxed
2. _____ deep breaths in
3. Breathing control until you feel relaxed
4. _____ deep breaths in
5. Huff long/short and sharp
6. Cough

In _____

Repeated _____

Contact us

Contact your physiotherapist on the below number:

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Sources used for the information in this leaflet

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